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The perforations may be at an end zone of the pockets.

5 The drum and pockets may be rotationally displaceable between an upwardly directed inclined position and a downwardly directed inclined position by partial rotation of said drum and pockets.

The pockets may also rotate in a plane perpendicular to the rotational displacement of the drum.

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Thus, a food product may be placed in one or more of the pockets which do not include elements which move relative to one another during rotation. Thus, during a rotational movement, the entire drum including all of the pockets rotate as a unit.

15 Accordingly, as can be appreciated, this means that the food product is not susceptible to being pinched between moving elements and therefore the creation of mashed food products can be avoided.

20 In this specification, the words "integral", "integral unit" or the like, unless indicated to the contrary, shall thus be understood as characterizing the expression "receiving pockets", or any similar or analogous expression as being a body which does not include elements which move relative to one another during rotation.

25 According to a further aspect of the invention, there is provided a cooker apparatus including:

- a drum;
- one or more food receiving pockets associated with the drum, said pockets being configured for cooking food product in a heating liquid, which pockets have an open end;
- 30 - cover means for covering at least one open end of said pockets; and
- rotation means for rotatably mounting said drum and pockets to a housing such that said drum is rotatable with respect to said housing about a horizontal axis; and
- at least one lever to rotate the said drum and pockets about said axis.

generated by burning the gas to the heat transfer medium.

The apparatus may include a housing in which the heat transfer fluid receptacle is housed.

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The housing may also house the drum.

The heat transfer fluid receptacle may be positioned at such a location in the housing that the lower portion of the pockets i.e. the perforated portion of the pockets, is immersed in the heat transfer fluid when the drum is rotationally displaced by a predetermined extent.

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The heat transfer receptacle may include a sludge outlet in order to facilitate the removal of the food debris thereby prolonging the useful life of the heat transfer fluid.

The heat transfer receptacle may include the life extension means described above, including but not limited to oil filters, screens, separators, and the like.

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It should be appreciated that the heating means may also be positioned in close proximity to the receptacle containing the heat transfer fluid.

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The apparatus may include means for automatically coordinating the activity(ies) of each of the parts thereof by means of an automatic control means provided with the necessary rules and instructions.

The automatic control means may comprise suitable mechanisms for activating and controlling the various parts of the apparatus. Such control means are known in the art and will thus not be particularly described herein.

The control means may, for example, comprise any suitable timer control mechanisms for controlling, in a timed, cooking cycle sequence, the amount of food product to be inserted in a pocket, the cooking time (i.e. the time food product is immersed in cooking liquid), the start and duration of food product discharge, the start and duration of immersion time, the activation/deactivation of the rotation of the drum.

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Claims

1. A cooker apparatus including:
 - a drum;
 - 5 - one or more food receiving pockets associated with the drum, said pockets being configured for cooking food product in a heating liquid, which pockets have at least one open end;
 - cover means for covering at least one open end of said pockets; and
 - rotation means for rotatably mounting said drum and pockets to a housing such
 - 10 that said drum is rotatable with respect to said housing about a horizontal axis; and
 - at least one lever to rotate the said drum and pockets about the axis.
2. A cooker apparatus as claimed in claim 1, wherein the pockets include a tube with a cylindrical body with walls including a plurality of perforations at a lower portion
- 15 thereof, which lower portion defines an integral food pocket for releasably holding the food.
3. A cooker apparatus as claimed in claim 1 or claim 2, wherein the dimensions of the pocket at its open end corresponds with the dimensions of a cooked food container
- 20 so that when the container is releasably positioned and snugly fitted over the open end of the said pocket, cooked food products are discharged from the food pocket into the container for serving purposes.
4. A cooker apparatus as claimed in any one of the preceding claims, wherein the
- 25 rotation means for rotatably and removably mounting said drum is a spindle shaft.
5. A cooker apparatus as claimed in any one of the preceding claims, wherein the drums include locking means to prevent unauthorized use thereof and a counter device for measuring the amount of portions fried or cooked, said counter device correlating
- 30 the number of times the drum was rotationally displaced about its rotational axis through a predetermined arc.
6. A cooker apparatus as claimed in any one of the preceding claims, the apparatus including immersing means for immersing and withdrawing at least the pockets into a

receptacle of the heat transfer fluid.

7. A cooker apparatus as claimed in claim 6, wherein the immersing means is incorporated in the rotation means.

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8. A cooker apparatus as claimed in claim 6 or claim 7, wherein the immersion means includes a displacement mechanism for displacing the pockets, the displacement mechanism including a pivot arm fixed to the drum.

10 9. A cooker apparatus as claimed in any one of claims 6 to 8, including at least one heating means in the form of a helical coil positioned in the receptacle of the heat transfer fluid.

15 10. A cooker apparatus as claimed in any one of claims 6 to 9, including a housing in which the heat transfer fluid receptacle is housed.

20 11. A cooker apparatus as claimed in any one of claims 6 to 10, wherein the heat transfer fluid receptacle is positioned at such a location in the housing that the perforated portion of the pockets is immersed in the heat transfer fluid when the drum is rotationally displaced by a predetermined extent.

25 12. A cooker apparatus as claimed in any one of claims 6 to 11, wherein the heat transfer receptacle includes a sludge outlet in order to facilitate the removal of food debris thereby prolonging the useful life of the heat transfer fluid

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13. A cooker apparatus as claimed in any one of the preceding claims, including means for automatically coordinating the activities of each of the parts thereof by means of an automatic control means provided with the necessary rules and instructions.

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14. A cooker apparatus as claimed in any one of the preceding claims, including vibrating means provided for vibrating the pockets in order to shake off free cooking liquid from food products and/or the pockets after the frying or cooking process has been completed.

15. A cooker apparatus as claimed in any one of claims 6 to 14, including a guide for guiding the food debris towards a cold zone of the heat transfer fluid in the receptacle.
- 5 16. A cooker apparatus as claimed in claim 15, wherein the guide includes a separation device which prevents the free movement of the food debris through the heat transfer fluid and guides the food debris away from heating elements towards a drain portion of the apparatus.
- 10 17. A cooker apparatus as claimed in claim 16, wherein the separation device is a sheet having a portion located within the heat transfer fluid and at least partially screening the heating elements from the food debris.
- 15 18. A cooker apparatus as claimed in any one of the preceding claims, including a condenser system which includes an air pump which blows air into the housing adjacent where the cooking is taking place and forces the hot air into the outlet pipes and then into a condenser tank where condensed gasses are collected and non-condensibles are directed back to the pump after passing through a filter system thereby reducing the necessity for a canopy extractor system.
- 20 19. A vending machine incorporating an apparatus as claimed in any one of the preceding claims.